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(54) Title: ONLINE MARKETPLACE FOR FOOD, LIQUOR, BANQUET & DEEJAY INDUSTRY IN AN AUCTION, NAME YOUR PRICE AND FIXED PRICE SETUP

(57) Abstract: This technology is an electronic Commerce Auction solution that Auctions Food Caterings (In-House and outside), Liquor Caterings, Cocktail Parties, Banquet Hall, DeeJay Services and On-going home food delivery in an Online Marketplace setup. This solution also allows customer to name their price for Event. This solution also provides provision for restaurants to sell fixed price menu items. Consumer can also Mix and Match various kinds of Cuisine food for a specific event and get them catered. Consumer can also get best value in food from Merchants and small home businesses on regular basis for home or business. Consumer and other Businesses can also order lunch directly from local cafes and fast foods (Fixed Price Food Online Ordering). We will provide Merchant Ratings based on our internal standards and Consumer Ratings. Based on customer selected preference the software matches the right merchant with the best value using ratings.

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Description Of Invention

## ***Online Marketplace for Food, Liquor, Banquet & DeeJay Industry in an Auction, Name Your Price and Fixed Price setup***

### **CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION:**

This application is a continuation in part of U.S. application Ser. No. 60/460221, filed April. 16, 2003, which document is incorporated herein by this reference

This application is a continuation in part of U.S. application Ser. No. 60/496489, filed Aug. 20, 2003, which document is incorporated herein by this reference

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:**

This technology is an electronic Commerce Auction solution that Auctions Food Caterings (In-House and outside), Liquor Caterings, Cocktail Parties, Banquet Hall, DeeJay Services and On-going home food delivery in an Online Marketplace setup. This solution also provides provision for restaurants to sell fixed price menu items. This solution also allows customer to name their price for Event.

Traditionally when consumer wants to arrange an event, they have two options, they can just go to the Merchant who was recommended or to drive around and check out restaurants and taste food. This is a very frustrating process and even after so much research customer may still end up with non-ideal merchant. For example, there are 120 Indian restaurants in northern California, after taking samples of research, it was found that an average Indian is only knowledgeable of up to 10 Indian restaurants. With this solution, it opens up the competition to all 120 restaurants compare to 10.

Marketing is a major roadblock for new or small business to get over. They want to compete with big merchants but they cannot afford to market themselves enough to attract business and up to 50% of the time they end-up closing down.

This solution will give a fair opportunity to everyone and put business in front of all the merchants in the area. The bid qualification is not only done based on the lowest prices but also those who have good quality food, customer service, cleanliness, ambiance and features etc

### **DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION:**

This technology is an electronic Commerce Auction solution that Auctions Food Caterings (In-House and outside), Liquor Caterings, Cocktail Parties, Banquet Hall, DeeJay Services and On-going home food delivery in an Online Marketplace setup. This solution also provides provision for restaurants to sell fixed price menu items. This solution also allows customer to name their price for Event. Consumer can also *Mix and Match* various kinds of Cuisine food for a specific event and get them catered. Consumer can also get best value in food from Merchants and small home businesses on regular basis in food for home or business. Consumer and other Businesses can also order lunch directly from local cafes and fast foods (Fixed Price Food Online Ordering). Consumers can have piece of mind in selecting the right Merchant, as we will provide Merchant Ratings based on our internal standards and Consumer Ratings. Based on customer selected three preference this technology matches the right merchant with the best value using internal ratings. This solution will provide opportunities to unpopular, new and small restaurants as well as home run businesses to be part of the competition in providing the best value to consumer and overcome the monopolization of Merchants. In other words, this technology provides "Event For Less".

The consumer and merchant interface to this technology is Internet either via Computers or handheld devices (like Palm Pilots, cell phones and PDA's), Alpha pagers and telephone. Consumer and Businesses will access this solution through Internet and/or via telephone. The Technologies used to develop this technology are combination of HTML, JSP, Java, Java beans, API, Java serve-lets, JDBC, Microsoft front page and Dream weaver etc. This technology utilizes online Electronic Funds transfer and Credit card processing from third party companies. This technology has three main modules as follows:

- 1) Merchant Module
- 2) Customer Module
- 3) Administrator Module

Customer Module offers the option to customers or consumers of this technology like logon, lost ID or Password, register new customers, customer to create bid requests, customer can check status of bid request, customer to change order, customer to order food on fixed price, customer to create restaurant reservation, customer to check events, customer search coupons and specials, check menus and ratings of merchants, post reviews about the restaurant, find out magazine articles, find out restaurant of the month, contact information and about us.

When customer creates a bid request, they have option to either create a request called *Bid Request for Food Catering Delivery for Event or Meeting, Food Catering pickup, Food catering with banquet hall, Regular home food delivery, cocktail party, liquor bar catering, Banquet Hall only and DeeJay services provider*. When customer are creating Bid request, they offer series of question includes location, number of people, type of cuisine, special food requirement (Vegetarian, Halal, Kosher, organic etc), Main course/ appetizer/ sweet dishes selection, drinks, number of dishes, delivery dates and times, spending limit and time for response, dance floor, dance lights, projection, LCD, TV, sound system, microphone, DeeJay with banquet, out door capacity, free parking, smoking status, loud music capable, video games, live entertainment, decorations and kinds, delivery frequency, delivery days, preferred time, types of liquor, types of Beer/ hard liquor/ mixed cocktail, Bar tender with the liquor catering, Serving bar with the liquor catering, kind of music and length of time for event or DeeJay services needs etc.

After customer makes their initial selection they select their preference in selecting the right merchant. They also provide three dates in the order of preference and time of the day (morning, lunch, evening or all day event). This step uses our *Bid Selection System*. Customer can select their first, second and third preference in terms of lowest price, cleanliness, highest overall rating, quality, service, merchant delivered promise, price of event and ambiance. Based on customer's three preferences, our *Bid Selection Service* qualifies the right merchant. After customer selects their preferences and provides credit card information, this system generates a Bid Request Number.

When a Bid Request Number is generated, this triggers another system called *Bid Matching Service*. This program picks up customer needs and matches against Merchant's offerings and qualifies the right merchants who can potentially bid for this Bid request and sends an alpha page, email and update their account with this inquiry.

Merchants can choose to reply or ignore, if Merchant replies to the bid, they have to offer bid amount, which is under the customer budget. The merchant who is the lowest in price is not necessary the winner, this is determined by our Bid Selection service which uses customer preferences and date preferences and matches against our ratings and reviews and finalizes right merchant.

**Stages of Order:** There are three stages to Bid Request

**Stage #1:** This is the stage where customer creates a bid request and provides a value for time to find match within like (6-12-24 hours). This is the stage where this time has not reached.

**Stage #2:** This is the stage where customer has already created a bid request the value they provided for find match with has already reached. In this stage no merchant can bid and also the event date has not passed

**Stage #3:** This is the stage where customer has already created a bid request the value they provided for find match with has already reached and the event date has already passed. In this stage the order is officially complete.

After the request is completed and event has occurred, only then consumer can post their reviews about their experience with that specific merchant in terms of price satisfaction, cleanliness, highest overall rating, quality, service, merchant delivered promise and ambiance.

In Customer check Bid requests, customer can see if they got responses and either we were able to find the right merchant. Here customers find out if their request was successful or failed due to their budget being too low or no one provides service in their area. As soon as we find the right merchant, we disclose the contact information and name of the merchant and customer to both parties and ties customer, merchant and Farimira technologies in legal binding contract.

In customer fixed price Food Online Ordering system, customer can find the right merchant in their area and can order meal deals or offers from merchant from this website and can simply either pickup the food or have it delivered.

In Restaurant Reservation Request, customer can find the right merchant in the area and send a request for reservation, this sends email and message to the merchant. It is not a confirmed reservation unless merchants respond back to customer.

Customer can also find out coupons and specials offered by merchants in their area in the area of their needs, either for food, DeeJay, banquet or liquor bar. Customer can also see reviews, post reviews, menus, merchants video commercial and marketing message.

Customer will also be able to keep track of magazine articles in terms of our member's in news and the restaurant of the month.

In Merchant module, Merchants can login, lost user id or password resolution, create new merchant member, edit merchant menu, view merchants current business possibilities, merchants can respond to bids, merchants can view statuses of open bids, check bid history, check messages from administrators, post their coupons, post specials, post event and check requests for reservation.

Merchant membership request area requires many inputs in large number of parameters, like business name, participation type (auction, auction+fixed price, fixed price, post event only), kind of business (restaurant with liquor, restaurant with liquor, food caterer, bar, liquor caterer, DeeJay service provider, home caterer, banquet only), address, name, email, phone, online reservation, credit account, post menu, post 30 second commercial, post pictures of their restaurants, type of cuisines, types of main course dishes/ appetizers/ sweet dishes they offer, drinks, special food requirement that they observe, enter deals if they are participant in Fixed price Food Online ordering, banquet specific information like dance floor, dance lights, projection, LCD, TV, sound system, microphone, DeeJay with banquet, out door capacity, free parking, smoking status, loud music capable, video games, live entertainment, decorations and kinds, delivery frequency, delivery days, preferred time, types of liquor, types of Beer/ hard liquor/ mixed cocktail, Bar tender with the liquor catering, Serving bar with the liquor catering, kind of music and length of time for event or DeeJay services needs etc.

Merchants can view their current bid-able requests and provide three bids one for each of the three date provided by customer. At the time of bidding, merchants can see the lowest current bid. At that point if their response was lower than the customer budget, it accepts it as potential otherwise rejects their response.

Merchants can also view their current open requests and their statuses. Merchants can also view their bid history that includes all the successful and un-successful bid responses for their track record.

Administrators (Farimira technologies personnel's) can send messages to merchants via our internal messaging system. Merchants can read those messages here.

Merchants can post their coupons and specials of the day, week, month or year from here, redeemable by customer in-person visit only before coupons or specials expire. Merchants can also post their events happening on certain dates from here. The Events gets cleared after the date of event is passed.

Merchants can also read requests for reservations by customers. Merchants has no obligation to do anything about those requests unless if they want to take action about them, by a click of button they can send accepted or rejected emails to customers.

In administrator module, this is a restricted access area for employees only. The validation is done here as well as new administrator can only be created if employee id already exists in the database, which is entered via dynamic table. Administrators can be created, login, lost user id or password.

Here Administrators can post Events for customers or consumers, post a message for merchant, post ratings about merchant, post magazine publication and announce restaurant of the month. Administrator can also suspend and notate merchants and customers. Administrator can also pull a list of suspended and notated customer and merchants.

Administrators can also view all kinds of transactions like

- 1- All open transactions
- 2- Review all open transactions to date
- 3- Review all cancelled transactions to date etc

Administrators can also do financial activities from here, like:

- Check revenue generated from monthly membership fee and if there were merchants we were not able to collect fee from
- Check revenue generated from transaction fees in correspondence to *Bid Order Number and Merchant*
- Check revenue generated from membership setup fee and if there were merchants we were not able to collect fee from
- Cancelled orders and amount remittance to Merchants and Customers
- Payment pending to merchant, stop payment and to enforce payment
- Manually charge merchant on their credit card or credit merchant
- Send payments to merchant or customer etc

Administrators can also enter responses to bid manually for merchants

Administrators can also administer banners for member or non-member merchants etc.

Merchant membership setup includes:

- 1) Restaurant Menu
- 2) Restaurant Profile
- 3) Restaurant Business Hours
- 4) Restaurant Contact Info.
- 5) Restaurant Location and Map
- 6) Restaurant Amenities
- 7) Video commercial posting
- 8) Alpha Paging Device
- 9) Marketing
- 10) Adding in Various Databases

Merchant Maintenance includes:

- 1) Maintaining Menu Changes
- 2) Posting Special Events
- 3) Maintaining Amenities
- 4) Maintaining Restaurant Profiles
- 5) Restaurant Reviews

#### 1-Process: Bid Matching

This program is triggered when a customer creates a Bid request. This process basically picks up all the parameters provided by customers in terms of that they are looking for specifically like Kind of Cuisine, Type of music, special food requirement, number of people and location etc and matches with information provided by each merchant about what they offer and qualifies which merchant is best suited for this Bid Request. Based on the merchants selected by this service, the Merchant who were qualifies gets a page, email and notification in internal system that they have a possibility for business and sets up the alarm to wake up Bid Selection process in the time to find match within parameter (6, 12, 24 hours) provided by customer.

**2-Process: Bid Selection**

The Bid matching services sets up the alarm to wake up Bid Selection process in the time to find match within parameter (6, 12, 24 hours) provided by customer in the Bid Request creation process. At this point this program seizes any more bid responses from merchants. Then it takes the customer preferences in terms of Quality, Service, Promise delivery History, Cleanliness, Price of Event, Ambiance and overall ratings and also considers the three date preferences that the customer has provided as their preference for the event and finds the best one match of merchant and time for customer and informs both parties and ties them up in a contract.

**3-Process: Merchant and Consumer Connection**

After completion of the Bid Selection Process, we connect consumer and merchants by emailing consumer with the Merchant information and page Merchant with the consumer name and phone number.

**4-Process: Money Remittance to Merchant**

After successful purchase of the bid, we remit money to Merchants in different stages. Also, in the event of order cancellation, there are different remittance to customer and merchants.

**5-Process: Merchant Locator**

Merchant locator is a database of all member Merchants, their addresses, zip codes, cities and states. It is also a referential database for consumer to help them pick up the desired areas without having greatest knowledge about the zips codes of all cities. Also this is used internally in many areas of the program in picking up the right merchant to find their menus, ratings and reviews, pictures, profiles, commercials, Fixed price food ordering, etc.

**6-Process: Mix and Match Caterings**

Consumer can actually have more than one kind of food delivered for the same occasion. For example, they can have Indian, Mediterranean and Italian food catered on their Event.

**7-Process: Credit Card Validation**

At the point where consumer provides a credit card number before we request quotes from our Merchants, we run authorization on the credit card to make sure that it is a valid request.

**8-Process: Securing Funds**

When the time to find match within is elapsed and our Bid Selection process selects a merchant, we take full dollar authorization and secure funds.

**9-Process: Home Caterings**

Home catering is designed for consumers who wish to have food delivered on regular basis so they don't have to cook. Consumer can see Caterers reviews, ratings and menu of offerings. Then consumer has to logon and select type of food and determines if they would rather have it delivered or they want to pickup themselves. Then consumer provides dates or days and times for delivery. Then consumer identifies their spending limits or budget if any, which will be kept confidential. Then consumer enters their credit card number. Then we send a page to Merchants matching criteria and they reply back within certain time and we send email to consumer with finalized merchant.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:**

Figure# A1: This diagram is a flow chart of how the consumer and corporate can engage into placing a request for Event Order. There are various different kinds of request they can create including for Food catering like food catering delivery, Food catering pickup, Food catering Banquet Hall and On-going home food delivery. Also they can create request for Liquor Bar catering, event banquet Hall and DeeJay Music Service providers. In the request they need to provide certain set of initial information as well as their three preferences. These three preferences are responsible for finding that exact match through the software computation. This

also triggers merchant matching software daemon that matches the merchants that are best suited to be offered to submit bid to this solution.

Figure# A2: This diagram shows the Bid Matching Process. This program is triggered when a customer creates a Bid request. This process basically picks up all the parameters provided by customers in terms of that they are looking for specifically like Kind of Cuisine, Type of music, special food requirement, number of people and location etc and matches with information provided by each merchant about what they offer and qualifies which merchant is best suited for this Bid Request. Based on the merchants selected by this service, the Merchant who were qualifies gets a page, email and notification in internal system that they have a possibility for business and sets up the alarm to wake up Bid Selection process in the time to find match within parameter (6, 12, 24 hours) provided by customer.

Figure# A3: This diagram shows the Bid Qualifying Process. The Bid matching services sets up the alarm to wake up Bid Selection/Qualifying process in the time to find match within parameter (6, 12, 24 hours) provided by customer in the Bid Request creation process. At this point this program seizes any more bid responses from merchants. Then it takes the customer preferences in terms of Quality, Service, Promise delivery History, Cleanliness, Price of Event, Ambiance and overall ratings and also considers the three date preferences that the customer has provided as their preference for the event and finds the best one match of merchant and time for customer and informs both parties and ties them up in a contract.

Figure# A4: This diagram shows Rating Process. Customer can select their first, second and third preference in terms of lowest price, cleanliness, highest overall rating, quality, service, merchant delivered promise, price of event and ambiance. Based on customer's three preferences, our *Bid Selection Service* qualifies the right merchant.

Figure# A5: This diagram shows the process on the merchant (Restaurant and Caterer) side. They receive a page as well as internal notification within our software. Then merchants have two ways to provide their quotes.

Figure# A6: This diagram shows the Fixed Price Online Ordering system. Consumer can search for the merchant they are looking for and request lunch special to be delivered or picked up at Fixed Prices.

Figure# A7: This diagram shows the process on the merchant (Bar and Caterer) side.

Figure# A8: This diagram shows the process on the merchant (Banquet Hall) side.

Figure# A9: This diagram shows the process on the merchant (Deejay) side.

**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

1. Our invention auctions all kinds of cuisine in Food Caterings, Liquor Caterings, On-going home food delivery, Cocktail Parties, Banquet Halls and DeeJay Services to consumer and corporate for any kind of events
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said Our Invention automatically qualifies bid not just on the basis of lowest price but also involves other customer defined preferences factors which compliments our internal rating system.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein have a method of merchant qualification process where not all the merchants in the area gets the request, instead our software selects those specific merchants who addresses every needs of customer before Merchant gets a chance to respond to the request.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein merchants and small businesses can cater to customer on regular basis if they are the selected winner.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein merchant can participate in Online Restaurant Reservation System and confirm reservations with a simple click of button through our internal software utility.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein customers can order lunch specials from a merchant on fixed price basis through Internet and have it delivered or picked up.
7. The method of claim 2, wherein customer can post ratings against merchants in a way where Merchants are protected against customer's deliberate attempt to post false bad ratings.